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*Editorial*

# Support the Bangsamoro's right to self-determination and ancestral domain

**T**he issue of respecting the correlated rights of the national minorities to self-determination and ancestral domain lies at the crux of the Moro people's struggle against centuries of national oppression. It is therefore not surprising for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to persevere in asserting these rights in peace negotiations with the US-Arroyo regime.

It is becoming more evident, however, that they can only enjoy these rights if they continue with, and advance, their revolutionary armed struggle. The ruling regime has outrightly and thoroughly abandoned peace negotiations with the MILF. It has in fact stepped up its attacks against the Bangsamoro. The regime merely exploited the issue of ancestral lands and self-determination of the Bangsamoro in a renewed scheme to perpetuate itself in power.

In order to justify the renewed and intensified war against the Bangsamoro, the US-Arroyo regime has incited chauvinist anti-Moros to fight them and deliberately distorted the issue of self-determination and ancestral rights. Some elements of the reactionary opposition have likewise been riding on the ruling regime's jingoism. Thus, the justness of recognizing the Bangsamoro people's rights to self-determination and ancestral domain



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is being obscured and distorted to mean the dismemberment of the country and the ceding of Philippine national territory.

In the face of intensifying reactionary, chauvinist and fascist attacks on the Bangsamoro, it is imperative for the Filipino people to unite with the Bangsamoro and other national minorities. One significant way of demonstrating such solidarity is through the intensification of the separate but mutually supportive revolutionary armed struggles of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces and the New People's Army. The MILF and the national democratic revolutionary forces must likewise cooperate to strengthen and expand the revolutionary united front and various aspects of political work.

The Filipino people must put an end to the national oppression and chauvinism imposed on the Bangsamoro and other national minorities by the reactionary ruling class. Like the rest of the Filipino people, the Bangsamoro are also oppressed by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. Moreover, they suffer the added particular burden of national oppres-

sion, which includes a long history of grabbing of their ancestral lands and the plunder of their natural resources. They are victims of reactionary state violence, and of reactionary laws and programs and a range of deceptions and schemes. They are constantly deprived of much-needed social services. They are deliberately kept poor and backward. They are among the most impoverished sectors in the country, are treated with contempt and regarded as second-class citizens.

The heroic struggle of national minorities against national oppression has long been etched in Philippine history.

The Bangsamoro struggle is among the most intense and persevering. As a result of their determination, the Bangsamoro have become the target of brutal military expeditions, intense wars and genocidal campaigns from the Spanish and American colonial periods up to the time of the present ruling puppet regime. The oppressors aim to subjugate them and place them under reactionary power, fragment and seize their ancestral lands and condemn them to re-


main the most aggrieved sector in society.

With US prodding, the ruling regime, through its armed minions and other despotic reactionaries, is now waging a ruthless military campaign against the Bangsamoro. US imperialism and its puppet regime have gone to great lengths to isolate the armed Bangsamoro movement from the rest of the people of Mindanao and the entire nation, stoking the fires of bigotry and religious fanaticism in order to suppress the Bangsamoro struggle.

These schemes will fail if the Bangsamoro and the rest of the Filipino people unite locally and on a nationwide basis. To achieve this, it is necessary to recognize historical realities and unify the just and legitimate interests and rights of Moros and the rest of the people. In building and further expanding the revolutionary united front in Moro areas and in ancestral lands that are in the process of being recovered, it is most crucial to persevere in winning over the majority of the people to unite on the basis of the common and particular aspirations of both Moro and non-Moro peoples. This serves the expanding concept of the Bangsamoro and their movement which encompasses other national minorities and oppressed non-Moros who constitute a significant number within Bangsamoro territories. In this regard, significant gains can be attained through firm coordination and cooperation in revolutionary tasks in Bangsamoro territories and surrounding areas.

The eradication of the national oppression of the Bangsamoro and other national minorities can only be realized under a new revolutionary setup. Only through the country's liberation from the clutches of imperialism and all

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## Tactical offensives in solidarity with the Moro struggle

**E**scalating military attacks against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front which have resulted in the displacement of Moro and non-Moro civilians warrant a direct response from the revolutionary movement of the Filipino people, said National Democratic Front-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge “Ka Oris” Madlos in a statement on August 25.

Ka Oris, nonetheless, has advised the MILF to adhere to international laws of war and the protocols of internal armed conflict to win the sympathy and support of the people. The legitimacy of the Moro people’s armed struggle for self-determination should not be undermined by the negative impact of destruction and the deaths of countless civilians, he added.

The Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization (MRLO) likewise expressed solidarity with the current MILF struggle. The MRLO is the national-democratic underground mass organization of the Moro people under the NDFP. According to the MRLO, the Bangsamoro people have been able to keep their ancestral lands due to the armed struggle that the revolutionary forces of the Moro people have been waging for decades in defense of their ancestral rights. Thus, it is but correct and essential for the MILF and the Moro people to tread the path of armed struggle and unite with other revolutionary forces to fight the fascist attacks of the US-Arroyo regime. **AB**

*“Editorial,” from p. 2*

reaction can national oppression, exploitation and contempt for national minorities be eliminated, self-governance fulfilled, their communities developed and their welfare advanced. It is through the absolute attainment of national liberation and democracy that all peoples and nationalities will enjoy freedom, equality and fraternity and possess the basis for their all-sided advance under a united Philippine nation. **AB**

## Recognizing the right to ancestral domain lies at the core of genuine autonomy

*Excerpted from the statement of Simon “Ka Filiw” Naog-san, spokesperson of the Cordillera People’s Democratic Front (August 25, 2008)*



**T**he Cordillera People’s Democratic Front (CPDF) resolutely upholds the right of national minorities to defend their land, life and resources. As opposed to the GRP’s obfuscation of the ancestral land concept, the CPDF believes that the recognition of ancestral land rights is absolutely essential in achieving

genuine regional autonomy. And genuine autonomy can only be achieved within a truly free and democratic state, free from imperialist control, domestic feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism.

As long as the current corrupt system exists, genuine autonomy can never be achieved. Any autonomous setup will only become just another cog in the corrupt machinery, subject to the whims of opportunist politicians seeking power and wealth. As long as there is no national self-determination, there can never be genuine regional self-determination.

The oppressed national minorities have the right to secede, more so under conditions of national oppression. In fact, the oppressed and exploited Filipino people must secede from the current semifeudal and semicolonial state ruled by the landlord-comprador classes currently led by Gloria Arroyo. The entire Filipino people must attain complete national self-determination from the stranglehold of US imperialism.

We the Cordillera people share with the Moro people a common history of national oppression. We both suffer from the state’s violation of our right to self-determination—in the unjust land laws, policies and projects that dispossess us of our ancestral lands; in the violation and misrepresentation of our indigenous socio-political systems; in institutionalized discrimination and Christian chauvinism, in the commercialization and bastardization of our culture, and in the historical denial of government social services. **AB**

## Arroyo regime backs out of peace talks

**T**he US-Arroyo regime completely abandoned the peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) when it officially dissolved the peace panel tasked to negotiate with the MILF.

Malacañang's announcement came on September 3, a few days after Arroyo ditched the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MoA-AD) and claimed that it had not given the government negotiators the authority to enter into such an agreement.

Prior to this, the AFP continuously poured in battalions of soldiers in Mindanao to attack the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). Bombings and other military operations have been going on for close to two weeks against civilian communities and have caused large-scale destruction, massive evacuations and unimaginable misery for over 500,000 civilians. This was in spite of Malaca-

ñang and the AFP's denial that they have been carrying out an all-out war against the MILF.

Malacañang has also declared that it would no longer engage in peace talks with any armed force, including the national-democratic revolutionary forces. Any such negotiation will now fall under the framework of "demobilizing, disarming and rehabilitating" such armed groups. Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro further claimed that the MILF has been reduced to insignificance and that it was now more important to talk with the people "in the localities." This means that the regime has shifted to negotiating with its own shadow.

The MILF has refuted Malacañang's call for its capitulation and stands firm in asserting the MoA-AD as an official pact, and the right of the Bangsamoro forces to defend their territories through armed means. AB

## Moro ancestral lands: A history of land grabbing

**U**ntil the end of the Spanish colonial period at the turn of the 20th century, 75% of the population of Mindanao consisted of indigenous Moros. This was a testament to the Moro people's successful struggle to defend their ancestral lands. But ever since the US colonizers began their occupation of the Philippines, the Moro people have been gradually retreating and suffering enormous defeats. They were eventually subjected to colonial and neocolonial rule which tried to wage ethnocide against the Moros.

Due to more than a century of reactionary laws, deceptions and intense ethnocidal wars, less than 17% of Mindanao territory is currently occupied by the Moro people, much of it desolate and barren lands situated in farflung highlands. More than 80% of the Moros

are now land-starved. Their provinces and islands are among the most impoverished nationwide.



**Utter disregard for ancestral lands.** When the US occupied the Philippines, it immediately passed into law the Land Registration Act (LRA) that made land registration and payment of land taxes mandatory. Public Land Act (PLA) 718 which was issued in 1903 outrightly brushed aside the authority of indigenous leaders over their lands and subjected these lands instead to the absolute authority of the colonial state. Under PLA 926, any tract of land not registered with the LRA was automatically classified as public land and placed under colonial state ownership.

The Mining Law of 1905 declared all public lands open to mining exploration. It allowed foreign ownership and paved the way for American corporations to grab vast tracts of land in Mindanao, Cordillera and various other areas in the country. In connivance with puppet officials, foreign capitalists and local ruling elites were able to seize enormous territories

by utilizing the complicated bureaucratic processes of the Cadas-tral Act of 1907 and submitting bogus land surveys.

**Entry of settlers and Moro displacement.** Since the US colonial era until the Marcos dictatorship, the reactionary elites have encouraged the entry of settlers into Moro ancestral lands and territories of other national minorities. This was the scheme used to drive away the Moros, grab their lands and break the people's unity. It was deemed "the only decisive solution" to the resolute resistance of the Moro people in Mindanao.

In 1913, the colonial government positioned settlers in the middle of Moro ancestral lands in Cotabato, Lanao and Basilan. Thousands upon thousands of settlers were lured into these territories so they could initially mingle with the Moros until they gradually overpowered and eventually supplanted them. Under PLA 2254, Moros had the right to own a maximum of only eight hectares of land while new settlers were allowed 16 hectares. Under PLA 2874, the maximum limit on land ownership was upped to 10 hectares for Moros while settlers got to own up to 24 hectares.

The Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1935 encouraged the influx of even more settlers in Mindanao. It declared Mindanao a special target for the building of more settler colonies. With the implementation of Commonwealth Act 141 of 1936, Moro land ownership was further reduced to a mere four hectares, while the settlers retained 24 hectares. Corporations not owned by Moros were permitted ownership of up to 1,024 hectares.

In supposed preparation for an imminent Japanese invasion, Commonwealth Act 441 passed in 1939 prioritized land distribution to settlers who had completed their mi-

litary training. Most favored were settlers who had been trained in *arnis* (or stick-fighting) or swordsmanship and therefore had the capacity to fight against Moros armed with kris. Three more areas in the valleys of Cotabato and Koronadal were opened for settlers. The law also appropriated 12 hectares each and financial support amounting to P7.5 million for 200 Christian settlers.

In 1950, the puppet state established the Land Settlement Development Corporation that took charge of land distribution to 1,500 new settlers. This was eventually replaced by the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA) in 1954 that was able to give out lands to 20,500 people until 1963, primarily in Lanao and Cotabato. Its coverage also expanded to the Davao provinces in the 1950s. In 1980, the Ministry of Agrarian Reform administered an additional 23 resettlement projects in Mindanao that distributed lands to 22,639 new settlers in Mindanao and Sulu.

**Land grabbing by foreign corporations and big landlords.** Beyond the vast tracts of lands that had been distributed to settlers, wide expanses of the Moros' ancestral lands were likewise seized by big foreign and local capitalists.

In 1957, Firestone Tire and Rubber Company was granted 1,000 hectares of land for a rubber plantation in Makilala, Cotabato.



In 1963, Dole Philippines acquired vast tracts of land for a pineapple plantation in Cotabato. In 1966, Weyerhaeuser Corporation was granted a 72,000-hectare logging concession in Mindanao.

Many more compradors and bureaucrat capitalists were granted big logging concessions in Mindanao. One of them was the Bislig Bay Lumber Company that was granted 141,000 hectares in Surigao. Massive land areas for logging, mining and plantations were also given to big comprador families like the Sarmientos, Mag-saysays, Sorianos, Cojuangcos, Puyats, Alcantaras, Ayalas, Floirendos, Yuchengcos, Elizaldes and Roceses.

The Piñol clan was able to grab over 2,500 hectares of ancestral Moro and Lumad lands that were later converted to rubber plantations, mostly in North Cotabato. As a foil against national minorities who had become victims of land grabbing, the Piñols and other land grabbers formed armed fanatic groups like the Ilaga to serve as their private armies.

AB

# Revival of the Ilaga and fascist fanatic groups

Using reactionary anti-Moro politicians as conduits, the Arroyo regime is currently pushing the revival of vigilante forces to use them in the intensified war against the Bangsamoro. Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Sec. Ronaldo Puno is also encouraging the proliferation and expansion of armed vigilante groups under the reactionary state to fight the MILF revolutionary forces and the national democratic movement not only in Mindanao, but across the archipelago as well.

Malacañang has been vigorously arming, strengthening and unleashing armed vigilantes with the instigation of North Cotabato Vice Gov. Emmanuel Piñol, Supreme Commander of the Ilaga, an anti-Moro fanatic group. The Ilaga was previously utilized as a private army for land grabbing campaigns and in waging genocidal war against the Moro people. Former elements of Tadtad, Muslim-Free Mindanao and Crusade of the Children of God, among others, are now being regrouped under the New Jerusalem Movement or Reform the Ilaga Movement.

The formation of armed vigilante groups has long been a dirty tactic of ruling reactionaries to sow terror and suppress people's struggles. These vigilante groups sow violence, terrorism and fear among the

people. Under the Marcos dictatorship, the AFP trained paramilitary groups and encouraged the formation of the Ilaga, Monkees, Beatles and religious-fanatic groups such as Tadtad, Rock Christ, Kill a Komunist for Krist (KKK) and many others.

Under Puno, then Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, the systematic indoctrination of barangay tanods was undertaken in secret training schools for them to serve as auxiliary forces of the AFP in suppressing the revolutionary movement and propping up the fascist regime. Puno patterned his indoctrination program after the Brown Shirt Stormtroopers that propped up Adolf Hitler's rule in Germany. His project was stymied with the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986.

This scheme is now being revived by Puno, who is taking advantage of the calculated chaos created in Mindanao in order to arm "police auxiliaries" and "civilian volunteer organizations" under the DILG's direction. A thousand shotguns and other war equipment have already been distributed to these paramilitary units. Another 12,000 additional firearms are set to be issued to them. The PNP has already admitted that the plan is to be implemented nationwide and will likewise be used against the NPA revolutionary forces. **AB**

## Involvement of US troops in combat exposed anew

The issue of continuing American military presence in the Philippines and US soldiers' direct involvement in combat operations surfaced anew when an American soldier almost ended up as one of the casualties in an ambush staged by the Abu Sayyaf bandit group. The US Armed Forces Guam National Guard unintentionally admitted that one of its members deployed with the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) was among mili-

tary elements ambushed by the Abu Sayyaf in Patikul, Sulu in end-August. The American soldier belonged to a platoon under the 1st Battalion, 294th Infantry Regiment of the US Army and has been deployed in Sulu since May as a member of the JSOTF-P. As added proof of US presence in that particular combat operation, it was US Army forces that gave first aid to wounded Fi-



lipino soldiers and US military helicopters that evacuated the AFP's casualties.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Alexander Yano continues to vehemently deny US troops' direct involvement in combat operations since this is a blatant violation of the reactionary constitution. However, apart from the recent episode in Patikul, Sulu, there has been other proof of US troops' direct participation in combat. In February, US and AFP troops jointly assaulted Barangay Ipil in Maimbung, Sulu, where Abu Sayyaf bandits were believed to be staying. Seven civilians were killed in the attack, including a child and a pregnant woman. A Filipino soldier on furlough, PFC Ibnol Wahid, was also among those killed. His widow Sandrawina witnessed the incident, identifying four US soldiers involved in her husband's killing.

Aside from such incidents, permanent structures have been built by the US in Zamboanga City like the JSOTF-P headquarters inside Camp Don Basilio Navarro; an air asset facility inside the Naval Forces of the AFP Western Command; and a training facility inside Camp Arturo Enrile in Barangay Malagutay that all point to the US' longterm military presence. Five big US ships and a number of smaller US vessels are likewise a permanent fixture along Recodo and San Ramon coasts in Zamboanga City. Despite questions raised with the JSOTF-P by Zamboanga Air Transportation Office Director Celso Bayabos regarding these structures constructed by the US Armed Forces at the Zamboanga International Airport, construction has even stepped up, with even bigger structures being built.

It will be remembered that the US military bases were dismantled in 1992 after the Senate scrapped the RP-US Military Bases Agreement. After a decade, however, 200 US Special Forces troops began arriving in Zamboanga City under the Visiting Forces Agreement. The purported objective of the so-called "visiting forces" was to train Filipino soldiers in fighting terrorists in Basilan. But after six years, US military presence in the area has become permanent and can no longer be denied.

American troops have always been present in Mindanao since then. From the initial 200 US soldiers, the number has swelled to 600 troops at present. The usual pretext is that the US military continues to train AFP troops and conduct "humanitarian missions." In fact, US military involvement in combat and other military operations has expanded and deepened since 2002 when US Pres. George W. Bush declared Mindanao as the US' "second front" in the "war against terrorism." AB

## Half a million civilians fall victim to AFP attacks in Mindanao



Close to half a million civilians have been displaced and suffered massive destruction to life and property due to relentless AFP offensives against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front-Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (MILF-BIAF) in Mindanao. More and more innocent civilians are being killed and wounded each day as a result of indiscriminate bombings and other human rights abuses committed by government troops in areas targeted by military offensives. Despite growing exposés, high-ranking AFP officers have been issuing vehement denials. Worse, the military has blocked and refused entry to aid workers bringing relief goods to the evacuees. The humanitarian crisis in Mindanao has bared as well the Arroyo regime's gross negligence in providing immediate assistance to displaced persons.

The latest report of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) dated September 3 places the number of displaced families at 100,024 (or 476,223 individuals). In total, close to 22,861 families or 111,133 people have sought shelter in 155 evacua-



tion centers.

**Glaring human rights abuses committed by the AFP.** Since August 26, the AFP has continuously launched ruthless aerial bombings and artillery attacks on suspected MILF-BIAF positions in the town of Piagapo, Lanao del Sur. The military positioned its 105mm howitzers right inside the Mindanao State University campus in Marawi City, sowing intense fear among students and teachers.

For fear of getting caught in the bombings, thousands of civilians fled their homes. Over 20 civilians have died as a result of the attacks, according to a Commission on Human Rights (CHR) report. But these atrocities have been covered up and denied by the AFP.

A number of civilians in Barangays Lapok, Tapihan, Tukanalipao, Dapiawan and Diate in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao have complained that AFP elements have been conducting illegal searches and raids on their homes and stealing their belongings. The same abuses have also been reported in the provinces of Maguindanao, Cotabato and Sarangani in past weeks.

Meanwhile, AFP troops fired cannons and bombed the towns of Guindulungan, Talayan and Talitay in Maguindanao the entire day on August 28. Three civilians were killed and five motorboats and a number of motorcycles were destroyed in the bombings.

Five more civilians fell victim to AFP artillery fire—Ali Lamalan, 17, student; Mantil Abdullah, 75, a

farmer from Barangay Dugungen, Mamasapano, Maguindanao; Saya Satol, 30, farmer; Angkad Matuwa, 79, a farmer from Dugungen; and Abdul Maliq Siddik, 60, businessman. Two more unidentified civilians were wounded.

A number of houses and work animals were also hit in unrelenting howitzer and mortar attacks and aerial bombings in Barangays Kuloy, Tapihan, Lapok, Dugungen, Malingao, Tina, Pamalian, Pusao, Pikeg, Bagon Upam and Libutan in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao. A hundred sacks of rice and personal belongings inside civilian houses were also looted by government troops.

Hundreds of civilians have evacuated and sought shelter at the Libutan Elementary School, Datu Tahir Ampatuan National High School, Mahad Libutan and Libutan Public Market. For over a week now, many internal refugees have been setting up tents by the roadside and seeking refuge in other people's homes. Some have fallen ill, particularly children and the elderly.

On August 29, soldiers under the Philippine Army 104th Brigade denied entry to United Nations (UN) convoys carrying packed meals for 400 displaced families from Lanao del Norte, citing orders from their commanding officer. Prior to this, a food blockade was also enforced by the AFP along the General Santos-Palimbang Highway in a vain attempt to starve off MILF fighters. But it was civilians who bore the brunt of the blockade. AB

## Military terrorism rages in city and countryside

**I**llegal arrests and intimidation of mass leaders and activists as well as terrorism accompanying intense militarization in the countryside mark the latest human rights reports received by *Ang Bayan*:

**August 31-September 2.** Combined elements of the PNP-Cavite and the Regional Special Operations Group (RSOG)-Calabarzon (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon) illegally arrested and tortured nine members of the Kalipunan ng Magsasaka sa Kabite

(Kamagsasaka-Ka). The victims were identified as Renato Alvarez, 63; Yolanda Carraig, 48; Neshley Cresino, 27; Franco Romero, 27; Felip Nardo, 24; Bernardo Derain, 36; Janice Javier, 26; Mario Joson, 55; and Jommel Igana, 19. They were abducted in Barangay Tartiana, Silang, Cavite on August 31 while on their way to a meeting to discuss a protest

action to be launched by their group in October against land-use conversion. The police claimed that the victims were armed.

The victims recounted that they had just come from Kamagsasaka-Ka president Renato Alvarez's house when the vehicle they were riding was blocked by 20 armed men aboard a van and a car. They were then seized, tied up and blindfolded and brought to Camp Vicente Lim in Calamba, Laguna. It was there that their fascist abductors attempted to rape





Cresino. Another operative, meanwhile, pointed a gun at Javier's nape when she refused to answer their questions. The interrogators also threatened to douse her in gasoline and burn her. Derain and Nardo received electric shocks to their heads and genitals while being forced to admit that they were alleged members of the NPA. Nardo was also ordered to dig his own grave.

The prosecutor ordered their release on September 2 after the arresting team failed to submit convincing evidence.

**August 28.** Four officers of Karapatan-Cebu received death threats from suspected military elements. The victims were Vimarie Arcilla, Jean Suarez, Concordia Oyao and Dennis Abarientos, Karapatan-Cebu secretary general. They received intimidating and threatening text messages from two persons who identified themselves as "Joy" and "Benjie." Joy and Benjie are known to be "resource persons" (or informers) in Bohol and Cebu of the 3rd Civil Relations Group and Intelligence Service of the AFP.

**July 26.** Operating elements of the 46th IB abducted Nomlon Gebane, 31. Gabane was making charcoal at a forested area in the uplands of Barangay Caranas, Motiong, Samar when the military chanced upon him. He remains missing to this day.

**July 22.** Soldiers from the 63rd IB fired at Bernabe dela Cruz inside his home in Barangay Rizal, Matu-

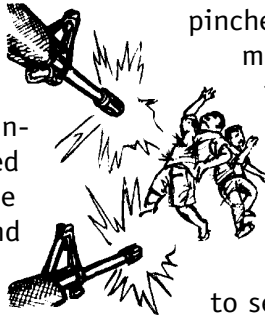
guinao, Samar. Meanwhile, military elements broke into several homes in Barangay Inubod in search of guns, but found nothing.

**July 6.** Elements of the 63rd IB physically assaulted brothers Gino dela Cruz, 12, and Lino dela Cruz, 10. The two boys were on their way home in Barangay Carolina, Matuguinao, Samar when they encountered the patrolling soldiers. The enemy soldiers pinched the boys' ears and threatened them with more bodily harm should the unit be attacked by the NPA.

In the same barangay, soldiers shot at another resident, Alvin Tenedero, who managed to run away unscathed. Other residents were also intimidated and accused as NPA supporters. A number of barrio folk were forced to serve the abusive soldiers.

Meanwhile, three houses in nearby barangay Rizal in the same town were burned down by the government soldiers.

**July 5 to present.** Four of 13 farmers abducted on July 5 in Barangay Andres Bonifacio, Cadiz City, Negros Occidental by the bandit Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA) remain behind bars. The four remaining detainees are Jose Perez, Jaime Lamberg, Santiago Antipuesto and Romulo Villanueva. The farmers, also known as the "Cadiz 13" were arrested while tilling their farms, later handed over to the PNP and charged with illegal logging. One of them was also accused by the RPA as an NPA member. AB



## Broader scope for writ of amparo mulled

The Supreme Court will look into the possibility of expanding the scope of the writ of amparo, said Chief Justice Reynato Puno in a speech at a forum held at the University of the Philippines College of Law in Diliman, Quezon City on August 28. According to Puno, the high court is studying the possibility for the writ's coverage to include economic, social and cultural rights.

The writ of amparo currently

covers cases pertaining to extrajudicial killings and abductions. In a press statement, Puno said the writ of amparo may also be expanded to include protection for the urban poor against demolitions and similar situations. This concept is in accordance with current practice in Latin American countries.

Should this push through, the move will be considered a precedent and hailed as a victory for progressive organizations,

said Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) secretary general Renato Reyes. Aside from BAYAN, other participants in the forum themed "Livelihood, Rights, Justice: A forum on economic, social and cultural rights: Violations and Remedies" were the National Union of People's Lawyers, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, PAMALAKAYA and Karapatan. They submitted their own proposals to the chief justice. AB



## Court orders release of "Tagaytay 5"

The dismissal of rebellion cases against the "Tagaytay 5" and an order issued by the Tagaytay Regional Trial Court (RTC) on August 29 for their release is a momentous victory for the peasant movement, said Anakpawis Rep. and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) chair Rafael "Ka Paeng" Mariano.

The "Tagaytay 5" are Aris Sarmiento, Axel Pinpin, Riel Custodio, Enrico Ybañez and Michael Masayes. Sarmiento, Pinpin and Custodia are members of Kalipunan ng mga Mag-sasaka sa Kabite (Kamagsasaka-Ka) while Ybañez and Masayes are both drivers. They were arrested on April 28, 2006 by combined operatives of the Cavite PNP and Naval Intelligence while passing through Tagaytay, Cavite. All five of them were la-

ter jailed in Laguna after rebellion charges were filed against them at the Tagaytay RTC.

On August 20, however, Judge Edwin Larida Jr. of RTC Branch 18 ruled that their arrest and detention were illegal and ordered their immediate release.

After the release of the "Tagaytay 5," Ka Paeng said he hoped that it would not be long before KMP deputy secretary-general Randall "Ka Randy" Echanis, 61, would be freed. Echanis was arrested by PNP operatives in Bago City, Negros Occidental in January and faces trumped-up murder charges in relation to the so-called "Inopacan Massacre" in Leyte in 1985.

Echanis was transferred from Leyte to the PNP Custodial Center

in Camp Crame, Quezon City. But on August 8, he was arbitrarily transferred to the Manila City Jail and detained with ordinary criminals. The sudden transfer triggered a series of protest actions. On September 1, the RTC Branch 32 ordered that the peasant leader be brought back to Camp Crame.

Prior to this, another victory was attained by the progressive movement on August 27 when kidnapping and murder cases filed against Bayan Muna Reps. Satur Ocampo and Teodoro Casiño, Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Liza Maza and Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano were found baseless and thereby dismissed by RTC Judge Napoleon Sta. Romana in Guimba, Nueva Ecija. AB

## Relatives of disappeared launch protest actions

Relatives of victims of involuntary disappearance staged protest actions in Manila and Iloilo City on August 30 as part of the commemoration of the International Day of the Disappeared.

Over a hundred people took part in a rally at the Plaza Miranda in Manila organized by Desaparecidos, an organization of families of victims of involuntary disappearance. Among the progressive organizations present were Anakbayan, Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Anakpawis and Amihan. After the program in Plaza Miranda, the protesters marched towards Mendiola Bridge carrying with them lighted lanterns to symbolize the light that guides them in their search for justice for their relatives who have not been surfaced to this day.

Meanwhile, in Iloilo City, the two daughters of SELDA-Panay spokesperson Luisa Posa-Dominado and the wife of BAYAN-Panay chairperson Nilo Arado, together with their comrades and friends, called for the immediate release of the two victims

and demanded justice. The two militant leaders were abducted in Oton, Iloilo by suspected elements of the AFP and the Revolutionary Proletarian Army bandit group in the evening of April 12, 2007.

Rep. Teodoro Casiño gave moral support to the relatives and victims of abductions: "Every tear, every expression of grief and anger by the families of the missing is an expression of fury, grief and anger by the Filipino people because a heinous crime such as involuntary disappearance has no place in civilized society."

Close to 2,000 people have been abducted and remain missing since the time of the US-Marcos dictatorship up to the present. In this regard, Mary Guy Portajada, Desaparecidos spokesperson, demanded immediate punishment for the implementers of Oplan Bantay Laya, including Gloria Arroyo, for their direct accountability for the involuntary disappearance of 193 persons since 2001. AB



# NPA seizes 81 firearms in tactical offensives

**T**he New People's Army (NPA) confiscated 81 firearms from a series of military actions launched in Rizal, Bulacan, Compostela Valley, Quezon, Batangas and Davao Oriental from July 27 to August 30. Meanwhile, two enemy soldiers were killed and many others wounded in an ambush staged by NPA fighters in Negros Occidental.

**In Bulacan.** Red fighters seized 24 firearms in two simultaneous raids in the afternoon of August 30. In the first tactical offensive, the Red guerrillas assaulted a Philippine National Police (PNP) detachment in San Isidro, Norzagaray at around 3:30 p.m., seizing an automatic rifle and four pistols. Almost simultaneously, another NPA unit raided a guard outpost in Palmera Homes, San Jose del Monte City, seizing eight high-powered firearms and 11 pistols. The objective of the military action was to confiscate

the weapons used by the security guards to harass farmers living in the vicinity of the subdivision.

**In Rizal.** Red guerrillas belonging to the Narciso Antazo Aramil Command of NPA-Rizal (NAAC-BHB) seized ten firearms in an assault on the RFM-Swift Company compound at around 3 p.m. on August 30. Among the firearms seized were five rifles and five pistols. The Red fighters were able to disarm

the on-duty security guards of Pinpin Security Agency without firing a single shot. Macario "Ka Karyo" Liwanag, NAAC-NPA spokesperson said in a statement that the disarming operation was a punitive measure for the company's blatant disrespect for workers' rights and violations of the policies of the People's Democratic Government on environmental protection.



**In Davao Oriental.** That same day, Red fighters disguised as Philippine Army soldiers raided the Core Mining Corporation compound in Barangay Calapagan, Lupon, carting away a "Baby Armalite," three caliber .45 pistols, a GPS compass and five communication radios.

**In Compostela Valley.** On August 28, at 8:30 p.m., an NPA unit assaulted the house of Sr. Insp. Emilio Bartonico Jr. in Purok 18, Barangay Poblacion, Maragusan. The chief of police was not around when the raid was carried out. The Red guerrillas were able to seize a .45 caliber pistol, rounds of ammunition and bandoliers.

**In Negros Occidental.** Two soldiers of the 61st IB Alpha Coy were killed when the government soldiers raided a squad of the Roger Mahinay Command (RMC) of NPA-Negros-Southwest Front on August 28 in Sitio Lamintaw, Barangay San Jose, Sipalay City. Several other troopers were wounded. It was the soldiers who suffered casualties despite their superiority in numbers and their more advantageous position. Ac-

## NPA releases Manero brother

THE Merardo Arce Command (MAC) of the New People's Army (NPA)-Southern Mindanao Region freed on August 24 Jose Manero, a former sergeant with the Philippine Army and bodyguard of the Lorenzo landlord family. The MAC arrested Manero on May 11 in Sitio Lorenzo, Barangay Pangyan, Calinan, Davao City.

Manero was granted conditional amnesty after he confessed to his crimes and issued a public apology for "all his crimes and serious human rights violations against the people and the revolutionary movement." In a statement, the MAC said Manero committed his offenses when he served as commander of various Philippine Army detachments.

Among the conditions for Manero's release was the assurance that he will no longer do anything that would be detrimental to the lives of the people and their livelihood and violate basic human rights, especially of the workers and peasants. Manero has also vowed not to fight the NPA.

Manero was released in Calinan district and turned over to Fr. Pete Lamata, parish priest of St. Mary's Church in Buhangin, Davao City.

Jose Manero used to be a member of the notorious Alsa Masa and is the elder brother of Norberto Manero, assassin of Italian priest Fr. Tullio Favali of Tulunan, North Cotabato in April 1985.

AB

*Continued on p. 12 "81 firearms..."*

## Oil firms set measly price rollbacks

OIL companies announced a ₱1 rollback on prices of diesel, gasoline and other petroleum products in the first week of September. But in the face of huge reductions in world market prices, progressive organizations and institutions are pushing for bigger price cuts on petroleum products in the Philippines.

Crude oil prices dropped to \$105/barrel in end-August from \$147 in July. But in the past weeks, rollbacks only amounted to a measly ₱4 to ₱4.50 in the country. The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan estimates that there should be at least a ₱7 rollback, which is equivalent to the price increases imposed from May to July.

It is to the oil companies' interest to grant rollbacks on a staggered basis in order to amass more profits. Amid huge price reductions in the world market, prices in the Philippines have decreased by only ₱1 per week. This is in stark contrast to the situation in July when oil firms raised petroleum prices by as much as ₱2 to ₱3 weekly.

Losses claimed by oil companies are simply baseless. This year, oil firms' gross revenues are expected to soar even higher. Shell posted revenues amounting to ₱3.1 billion in the first quarter of the year, higher than its average income of ₱2.7 billion for the same period in the last two years. Petron, on the other hand, registered ₱658 million in revenues in the first quarter. Last year, it reported annual revenues of ₱6.03 billion.

In 2007, Shell reported a 26% increase in its income compared to 2006—from ₱4.12 billion to ₱6.36 billion. Petron likewise reported a revenue increase of 6.3% in the same period. Their actual incomes are definitely higher than officially reported.

The oil giants have long been enjoying enormous profits. Since 1996, the combined incomes of Shell, Petron and Caltex came to a staggering ₱70 billion as reported in their financial statements.

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*From "81 firearms...", p. 11*

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cording to RMC spokesperson Ka Nilo Magtanggol, at around 9:30 a.m., Red fighters spotted the enemy soldiers who were maneuvering for attack. The Red guerrillas swiftly managed to take ambush position. Two military troops were killed on the spot and many others were wounded.

**In Southern Tagalog.** NPA fighters staged four raids, five punitive actions against class enemies and an operation to clear the area of enemy spies in the provinces of Quezon, Rizal and Batangas from July 27 to August 10. In total, they were able to seize 42 firearms—14 high-powered rifles and 28 pistols—aside from rounds of ammunition and military equipment.

AB

## Malacañang pockets funds for Filipino athletes

AS in previous sports events, Filipino competitors went home without a single medal from the Beijing Olympics in August 2008. Their sorry plight once again reflects the reactionary government's gross neglect of Filipino athletes and its lopsided budgetary priorities.

The Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) sorely lacks funds to train athletes. In fact, it finds difficulty paying an outstanding debt of ₱300 million. This is because the PSC has not been receiving its budget allocation from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO).

The PSC Charter states that it must receive 30% of the total revenues of six PCSO lotteries annually. Half of this amount alone is estimated to be adequate for athletic development programs. But PSC officials say that the PCSO has not given them any funds for the past three years.

On the other hand, pursuant to Republic Act 6847, five percent of the total revenues of the Philippine Gaming Corporation or Pagcor should go to PSC. But PSC officials also disclosed that they have received only half of this. Based on annual revenues of over ₱20 billion since 2005, PSC's mandated shares should be at least ₱1 billion annually. In reality, it has received a mere ₱400 million.

With Pagcor under the Office of the President, it is Malacañang that actually devours a huge portion of its funds. A Commission on Audit report indicates that over ₱17 billion worth of "cash advances" by Malacañang from Pagcor have not been liquidated nor have accompanying transaction records. Aside from Pagcor's automatic appropriation to Malacañang of half of its revenues, the Palace likewise enjoys separate allocations for "confidential, intelligence, extraordinary and miscellaneous expenses" and various "subsidies and donations" that it never accounts for. A big part of Pagcor's revenues (₱1.42 billion in 2007) also goes to the President's Social Fund and is not subject to audit.